



Where did they come from?

Bananas originated in the Malaysian jungles of Southeast Asia. Some researchers believe that bananas were the earth's first fruit and in some countries bananas were considered the principal food. Early travelers and settlers carried roots of banana plants as they migrated to the Middle East and Africa. As Spanish explorers brought bananas on their journeys they introduced the fruit to the New World. However, it was not until the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition when the bananas were officially introduced to the American public. Since the late 1800's bananas have been imported from other countries into the United States.

Where do they grow?

Bananas grow in tropical areas throughout the world. Bananas are not commercially grown in the United States but imported from countries in Central and South America including Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Mexico, and Nicaragua. Costa Rica and Ecuador are the largest exporters of bananas. Bananas are available all year long throughout the United States.

How do they grow?

Most people think bananas grow on trees but they actually grow on herb plants. Banana plants are a member of the lily family and are the largest herb plants in the world! Bananas grow best in tropical conditions since they require warm weather, rich soil and plenty of water. Bananas are formed inside a large bud, which grows upward from the root of the plant. As the bud grows, its petals open to a bunch of bananas called a "hand" which contains about 20 "fingers". Bananas are harvested when green and ripen while in the supermarket or after they are purchased.

Are they healthy?

- ✎ Good source of fiber, vitamin C and B6
- ✎ Rich in potassium which helps muscles work
- ✎ Low in calories and contain no fat, cholesterol or sodium

How do you pick a good one?

- ✎ Choose bananas that are firm and free of bruises
- ✎ Avoid those with brown spots or ones that seem soft
- ✎ Bananas are best when they have yellow peel speckled with brown dots

😊 FUN FACTS! 😊

Bananas

Did you know...

- 😊 **Did you know bananas are the most popular fresh fruit in the United States?**
- 😊 **Did you know bananas received a new name each time a different group of people discovered them?**
(Some of these included “banna”, “ghana” and even “funana”! The people of Africa are credited for giving the banana its permanent English name.)
- 😊 **Did you know bananas are the fruit choice of many athletes?**
(The reason --- they have both a high amount of carbohydrates as well as potassium! Potassium is a mineral that helps the muscles work.)
- 😊 **Did you know you can store ripe bananas in the refrigerator; the peel turns brown but the fruit inside will still be good?**
- 😊 **Did you know there is a banana primarily used for cooking?**
(It is called a “plantain”. It is used like a potato in many tropical lands.)
- 😊 **Did you know there are several different varieties of bananas?**
(These include “finger bananas”, “red bananas” and “plantains”. The popular yellow banana, “Cavendish” is the one we commonly see in grocery stores.)
- 😊 **Did you know that an average person eats 33 pounds of bananas each year?**
- 😊 **Did you know bananas have been produced for over 1 million years?**
- 😊 **Did you know more than 96% of American households purchase bananas at least once a month?**
- 😊 **Did you know that Dole packs single bananas in a special way specifically for school food service?**
(There are 150 single packed bananas in a case. These are always consistent in size, quantity, and quality and are pre-washed and pre-trimmed; ready to serve from the carton!)

Remember ...

Include 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day!



School Food Service Link.....

Quick Steps to 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day at school...

Listed below are suggestions that you may choose at your own discretion

RECIPES:

- ✓ Try a new recipe with bananas ---
Baked Bananas (USDA C-34)
Banana Bread Squares (USDA B-5 or B-5a)
- ✓ Offer peanut butter and banana sandwiches
- ✓ Sneak some fruit in pudding desserts; Add banana slices to vanilla or chocolate pudding
- ✓ Offer a whole banana or slices with hot or cold cereal
- ✓ Top banana slices with a spoonful of low fat yogurt and granola for crunch
- ✓ Offer banana-nut bread or muffins for breakfast, lunch or After School Snack
- ✓ Feature a "banana split or blast" for lunch!
(One each banana, 4 oz. low-fat yogurt, ½ or ¼ cup of crushed pineapple, diced peaches or cherries, ¼ cup or 1 ounce of granola and 1 oz. of peanuts, almonds or walnuts; Add a bag of animal or shaped graham cracker equaling 1 bread serving; Package in a plastic or boat style container.)
This can also be offered for breakfast --- simply change the portions!

Presentation Meal Appeal -----

Add Bananas to Puddings or Fruit Salads for a Unique Texture; Top with Granola for Crunch!

MARKETING:

- ✓ Contact Dole, Nicholas Schneider, for super resources!
(Examples: Fruit character cut-outs, posters, placemats, folders....
You can even use their Dole Banana costume for FREE!)
Phone: (973) 402-1192 nicholas_schneider@na.dole.com
- ✓ Check out the Dole web site for ideas www.dole5aday.com
- ✓ Advertise and highlight the fruit or vegetable of the month on your menu
- ✓ Refer to "Fruits & Vegetables Galore" Kit (*Meal Appeal Manual*) page 9

Quality:

Store Bananas at Room Temperature!
Ideal Storage Temperature is 56° -60°

PROMOTIONS:

- ✓ Promote a "Sticker Day" with prizes on featured fruit/vegetable menu day; Give this menu a special name
(Examples: *Banana Blast!* *Blast Off with Bananas!* *Banana Blitz!*)
- ✓ Feature "Yellow Day" on the day that you offer bananas on your menu
 - ✓ Encourage the entire school to get involved
 - ✓ Reward students with a small prize if they are wearing yellow
- ✓ Offer a "Banana Trivia" quiz. Place all returned quizzes in a box and pick out several winners, but be sure their answers are correct!
- ✓ Promote a "Blast Off with Bananas" day. Use space names for all the menu components.

Safety:

Remember Gloves Protect Food --- Not Hands!
Hands Should Always be Clean Before Putting on Gloves!